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[p r o l o g u e]

[image]

Prologue

-

"And in to the storm we go ."

o n e

Cold. It was so cold.

t w o

It started with the wind that had a merciless bite.

t h r e e

And then the sky turned dark , and it began to snow.

f o u r

But it wasn't like any other snowfall, oh no.

f i v e

This was much different.

[c h a p t e r 1]

[image]

Chapter 1

-

"And this is where the story begins."

s i x

I guess you could say it was a storm, a blizzard. However you'd call it. But not to me.

s e v e n

Oh! I'm Stagpaw by the way. I'm about to tell you a very important story.

e i g h t

Anyways, I first saw the snowfall — that's what we call it, *the snowfall* — the first day I became an apprentice.

n i n e

It was sunny in the SequoiaClan territory until *it* started.

t e n

And this is where the story begins.

[c h a p t e r 2]

[image]

Chapter 2

-

"Whitepaw seems okay."

e l e v e n

I dug through the fresh-kill pile, looking for a plump mouse — nothing too much, nothing too little.

t w e l v e

I grumbled when I could only find a scrawny one, it was no use. It wouldn't put any meat on my bones and that's what I needed most right now. I was an apprentice and I needed to be strong!

t h i r t e e n

"Hey! Stagpaw! Anything good?" Another apprentice named Whitepaw scampered up next to me.

f o u r t e e n

I shook my head, "Nothing." I sighed, "It's hard to believe that we're apprentices."

f i f t e e n

"That's too bad," Whitepaw shrugged, "I know right! It's so exciting!" He exclaimed.

s i x t e e n

"We should train together sometime, I'll ask my mentor." I purred, flicking my tail.

s e v e n t e e n

Whitepaw nodded, "Yeah! That'd be great." He looked at his paws before mumbling, "Would you - er, like to go hunting with me for a little?" He looked up, his eyes glinting with hopefulness.

e i g h t e e n

"Silly kit," I purred jokingly, "Of course I would! There's no use being cooped up in this boring camp anyways. Let's go!" I exclaimed before jumping past him.

n i n e t e e n

Whitepaw smiled brightly, scampering after me, "H-Hey! Wait up!"

t w e n t y

We ran into the frozen forest without looking back.

[c h a p t e r 3]

[image]

Chapter 3

-

"Nevermind , he's a mousebrain."

t w e n t y - o n e

I enjoyed the sun on my back as we ran through the forest, matching each other's pace with ease.

t w e n t y - t w o

I skidded to a stop when prey scent hit my nose and I flicked my tail towards Whitepaw before pointing in the direction of a bramble thicket, "I can smell a vole in there!" I whispered excitedly.

t w e n t y - t h r e e

Whitepaw frowned, "Really? I can't smell anything." I scoffed, "That's because you have fur up your nose!" I hissed quietly while creeping towards the thicket.

t w e n t y - f o u r

"*Meh, meh, meh*." I sensed Whitepaw rolling his eyes and mocking me from behind and I lashed my tail to bop him across the muzzle.

t w e n t y - f i v e

Whitepaw hissed before dashing ahead of me and launching himself into the thicket. "No! Wait! You'll-" I yowled before he crashed into the painful looking brambles and I cringed to myself.

t w e n t y - s i x

Suddenly, a loud squealing erupted from the thicket, and a nest of voles scurried from the brambles. I immediately pounced on the largest. I struggled to hold it down, it was so wriggly! I strained over and killed it with a swift bite to the neck.

t w e n t y - s e v e n

I saw Whitepaw swipe a smaller vole and then give it a nip to the spine to finish it off. I turned around to see if there were anymore voles. I saw one scurrying away to a nearby hole in a tree and I leapt after it.

t w e n t y - e i g h t

I landed on the vole, crushing its spine with my paws. I turned, huffing at Whitepaw once I killed the vole, "You shouldn't have done that! You can't just go crashing about wherever you please! My mentor said earlier that you have to be *quiet*."

t w e n t y - n i n e

"Well *I* didn't know that! It's our first day after all! At least we caught *something*," Whitepaw hissed, beckoning with his tail to the scrawny vole he caught. Suddenly, a strong gust of cold wind ruffled our fur and I noticed that the sun had vanished behind darkening clouds.

t h i r t y

And that's when the snow started to fall.

[c h a p t e r 4]

[image]

Chapter 4

-

"I hate the cold."

t h i r t y - o n e

"We have to get back to camp!" I yowled over the harsh wind as snow started to fall heavier before I noticed Whitepaw had already picked up his vole and started to run away. *Fur-brain.*

t h i r t y - t w o

I scrambled to grab the pair of voles, snatching them in my jaws. I barely managed to keep them from falling as I ran back towards camp.

t h i r t y - t h r e e

The light snow turned into a blizzard only heartbeats later and I felt frost forming on the tips of my fur. It was much colder than a usual blizzard, and it just came out of nowhere! *What was going on?*

t h i r t y - f o u r

I screeched to a careening halt as I came to a fallen tree. *Was that there before? I don't even know where I'm going! I shouldn't have gone out without my mentor!*

t h i r t y - f i v e

I glanced around, looking for another way around, looking for something to just... I suddenly felt cold, no, *freezing*. The frost had crept deep into my long fur and I felt my teeth begin to chatter.

t h i r t y - s i x

I didn't know where Whitepaw went. I didn't know my way back to camp. I couldn't even see a fox-length in front of me. All I saw were white flurries one after another.

t h i r t y - s e v e n

It was hard to move, I was growing tired and I felt my eyes begin to droop.

t h i r t y - e i g h t

Maybe I can just lay here for awhile... That sounded good to me. I lowered myself to the snowy ground before curling into a tight ball, trying my best to keep warm.

t h i r t y - n i n e

I watched as the snow fell quietly.

f o r t y

The last thing I saw before my eyes shut was Whitepaw rushing to me with a few other cats behind him.

[c h a p t e r 5]

[image]

Chapter 5

-

"Maybe he's not so bad after all . ."

f o r t y - o n e

I woke up to find a cat stooped over me, snuffing and prodding me about. I stifled a hiss as the cat went to my tail and nudged it. *How embarrassing.*

f o r t y - t w o

As my senses became clearer I recognized the cat as SequoiaClan's medicine cat, Mintheart. "Mintheart? What happened?"

f o r t y - t h r e e

"You almost died," Mintheart meowed bluntly and I rolled my eyes, "No. Really what happened? Why am I here?" Mintheart gave me a confused look, "You seriously don't remember?"

f o r t y - f o u r

I started to shake my head, "No I—" I gasped as the memories flooded back to me. *Whitepaw. Hunting. Blizzard. Tree. Cold. Sleep.*

f o r t y - f i v e

Mintheart sighed as she kneaded her paws in my fur in an attempt to keep me warm, "An unusual blizzard started and Whitepaw came running into camp yowling that you were still out there. So, we went to look for you. When we found you, you were curled up with ice stuck to your whiskers and fur."

f o r t y - s i x

"You were so *cold*. When I saw you I thought you were already dead. Whitepaw couldn't stop talking," Mintheart chuckled softly, "He kept babbling on to save you and that he didn't mean to yell at you—Whatever that means." She raised an eyebrow.

f o r t y - s e v e n

I looked to the ground. *I almost died?* "Is it still snowing?" I asked, turning back to look at Mintheart. Her eyes darkened, "Yes. It's been a day since it started. The snow just keeps coming." She shook her head.

f o r t y - e i g h t

"I've been asleep for a whole *day?*" I exclaimed. I heaved myself to my paws and scrambled out of the nest. "Woah— Wait!" Mintheart yowled after me as I rushed out of the den, "You need to keep warm!"

f o r t y - n i n e

The snow was up to my chin and I had trudge through it. I saw Whitepaw shivering at the entrance of the Apprentice's den and I yowled, "Whitepaw!"

f i f t y

When I finally made it to Whitepaw after moments of leaping and pushing through the snow, I noticed how miserable and terrified he looked. "Did something happen?" I questioned as he snapped his gaze to me. "B-Berryface's kits didn't m-make it," he choked out a wrenched sob.

[c h a p t e r 6]

[image]

Chapter 6

-

"Is Sweetwing secretly my mom?"

f i f t y - o n e

"*What?!*" I exclaimed, "But they were safe in the Nursery!"

f i f t y - t w o

Whitepaw shook his head, "We found them not very far from camp. Poppykit and Gorsekit were already dead from the cold... and we couldn't even find Larkkit." I couldn't believe it, "Was this when you were bringing me back to camp?"

f i f t y - t h r e e

Whitepaw nodded, "Yeah." I twitched my ears, flicking away a flurry of snow, "Well is there a patrol searching for Larkkit?"

f i f t y - f o u r

Whitepaw shook his head, "...No, it's too dangerous to leave camp. We can't." He sighed. I couldn't believe this, "Well I'm going to go look for her! She could still be alive out there for StarClan's sake!"

f i f t y - f i v e

"No! It's too dangerous!" Whitepaw repeated, "Not to mention you almost froze to death just yesterday!" He hissed. This tom was getting on my nerves.

f i f t y - s i x

I was about to hiss a retort when Sweetwing, a young newly made warrior approached us. "What are you two up to?" Her eyes glinted with interest.

f i f t y - s e v e n

"I want to go look for Larkkit!" I spat just as Whitepaw hissed, "None of your business!"

f i f t y - e i g h t

Sweetwing looked from Whitepaw to me before sighing. "Stagpaw, it's so cold and much too dangerous." She sounded like my mother. "I— You—I mean, you just can't," Sweetwing stumbled over her words as if she was afraid I'd bite her ears off.

f i f t y - n i n e

I snorted before shoving past her and Whitepaw and I ran out of camp. I couldn't believe they would leave a helpless kit out there all alone!

s i x t y

I'd find Larkkit without them then.

[c h a p t e r 7]

[image]

Chapter 7

-

"Kits are mouse-brained ."

s i x t y - o n e

I entered the freezing forest and immediately took a deep breath, looking around.

s i x t y - t w o

I huffed with a frown, all I could smell was the sharp scent of ice and snow. I started to bound through the mounds of snow and kept my jaws parted in case a whiff of Larkkit came my way.

s i x t y - t h r e e

I soon came to a vast clearing and I needed to squint through the falling snow in order to see the trees on the other side.

s i x t y - f o u r

I glanced around and let out a puff of breath when I realized I've been holding it in. Suddenly, a pitched squeal disrupted the silence and I pricked my ears in interest.

s i x t y - f i v e

I hesitated a moment before I heard it again, this time sounding more cat-like. *Could that be Larkkit?* I wondered as I bounded towards the direction of the noise.

s i x t y - s i x

I came to a rabbit-sized hole and peered down into it. I heard muffled whimpers of distress and I let out a tentative meow, "Hello?"

s i x t y - s e v e n

The kit squealed as it heard my voice and I stiffened, *why must it make so much noise for StarClan's sake?* The kit soon came into view and I gasped, it *was* Larkkit!

s i x t y - e i g h t

I clearly remembered the tabby she-kit, the smallest of Berryface's litter. This kit was no doubt Larkkit. "Larkkit? It's Stagpaw! Come on out of there," I called out.

s i x t y - n i n e

"I— I can't! I'm stuck!" Larkkit squealed, fear evident in her voice. I frowned, "How?"

s e v e n t y

"I slept here over night, a-and when I woke up my back paw was stuck to the ground!" Larkkit cried. I tilted my head, Larkkit's paw must have frozen to the ground when she slept. I stifled a whimper of distress, *how would I be able to get her out?*

[c h a p t e r 8]

[image]

Chapter 8

-

"Saved."

s e v e n t y - o n e

I wasn't sure what to do, I was barely experienced as it is. I'm only an apprentice! *How would a full grown warrior handle this?*

s e v e n t y - t w o

I was about to start digging to make the hole wider, when I heard crunching paw-steps behind me.

s e v e n t y - t h r e e

I swiveled around to see Blackstar, SequoiaClan's leader, approaching me.

s e v e n t y - f o u r

"Stagpaw, why are you out here alone?" Blackstar asked with an edge to his voice, "I heard about what happened earlier. You should be resting!"

s e v e n t y - f i v e

"*And* an apprentice as young as you are should at least have their *mentor* with them," Blackstar sternly meowed.

s e v e n t y - s i x

"I'm sorry Blackstar, but I—" I started but Blackstar interrupted me, "Not to mention that there's obviously something bad going on with StarClan," He growled, frowning at the sky that was filled with heavily falling snow.

s e v e n t y - s e v e n

"My apologies Blackstar," I tried again to ease my leader, "I just heard that Berryface's kits went missing and that Larkkit was still out here! I couldn't just stand by while she still could've been alive."

s e v e n t y - e i g h t

Blackstar sighed, "So then I'm guessing she's stuck in that hole?" I nodded, "Yeah, she's stuck in it..." Blackstar huffed before coming up to the hole and peering down into it.

s e v e n t y - n i n e

After a few moments of Blackstar poking around in the hole with a few muffled squeaks from Larkkit, he reemerged with her swinging from his jaws.

e i g h t y

My eyes widened, "How did you..." I breathed. Blackstar shook his head, "It doesn't matter now. Come on, let's get out of here. The snow is picking up again." He mewed before padding back towards the direction of camp.

[c h a p t e r 9]

[image]

Chapter 9

-

"It's okay."

e i g h t y - o n e

We entered camp and almost immediately the rest of our clan-mates gathered around us and pelted us with questions. *"What happened?" "Where was Larkkit?" "How did you find her?"*

e i g h t y - t w o

Blackstar parted his jaws to speak when Berryface came rushing forwards, "Larkkit? Larkkit! Oh great StarClan she's alive!" The queen said with a sob as she took her last surviving kit from Blackstar's jaws.

e i g h t y - t h r e e

I smiled when the small family reunited but my joy broke once more when Larkkit piped up, "Mama? Where's Poppykit and Gorsekit?"

e i g h t y - f o u r

Berryface's face fell when Larkkit asked where her siblings were, "Oh, Larkkit... Poppykit and Gorsekit aren't here anymore..."

e i g h t y - f i v e

I sighed, not being able to watch Larkkit slowly and painfully realize that her siblings were dead, and so I turned away to see Whitepaw staring directly at me with a sad expression.

e i g h t y - s i x

I padded over to him and he rose to his paws after I came face to face with him. I stared him in the eyes, "Was there something you wanted to say to me, Whitepaw?" I asked expectantly.

e i g h t y - s e v e n

Whitepaw shuffled his paws, looking down, "I'm sorry, Stagpaw..." He mumbled. I raised a brow, "For what?"

e i g h t y - e i g h t

Whitepaw peered up at me, "For yelling at you. For leaving you in that blizzard. F-For not going with you to find Larkkit. I'm... I'm so sorry." He bowed his head once more.

e i g h t y - n i n e

"Why'd you do it?" I whispered, barely audible. Whitepaw looked up at me again, "What?" I stared at him, "Why'd you leave me?" Whitepaw sighed a shaky breath, "Because I was scared... and I know that's a terrible reason but it's true. I was scared and I freaked out and I— I just ran. But I came back for you!"

n i n e t y

I surprised myself greatly as I felt my heart melt for Whitepaw and I gently caressed his neck with my jaw. *He did come back for me but shouldn't I still be angry with him?* But I just couldn't bring myself to be as he let out a soft sob. "It's okay," I whispered into his fur, "It's all okay."

[c h a p t e r 10]

[image]

Chapter 10

-

"The beginning to an end."

n i n e t y - o n e

It's been three sunrises since the start of *the snowfall*, the snow hasn't let up but the clan slowly started to resume its daily routines.

n i n e t y - t w o

I was currently huddled next to Whitepaw, we were keeping each other warm from the bitter cold.

n i n e t y - t h r e e

When everything seemed to be finally going well, a loud *creak* erupted from one of the frozen trees that covered the camp.

n i n e t y - f o u r

I quickly glanced to Whitepaw, "What was that?" Whitepaw looked almost as baffled as I did, "I'm not sure..." A few other cats themselves stopped their chattering to glance around at the trees with confused frowns.

n i n e t y - f i v e

I was about to murmur to Whitepaw once more when suddenly the largest tree closest to camp creaked and then tilted towards us, beginning to fall.

n i n e t y - s i x

My clanmates began to screech in alarm and I leapt to my paws as the tree came crashing down. "Whitepaw, come on! We need to get out of here!" I yowled, scrambling towards the camp exit.

n i n e t y - s e v e n

I looked back to see my clanmates rushing after me but I couldn't see Whitepaw and I felt a lurch of fear for my friend.

n i n e t y - e i g h t

The tree crashed to the ground with a sickening thud and I heard a familiar voice shriek in pain. I tried to push past my scrambling clan mates as they rushed out.

n i n e t y - n i n e

As the chaos finally quieted down, I raced over to the fallen tree to observe the damage. I heard a soft groan and my gaze shot towards the end of the trunk. I gasped, "Whitepaw!"

o n e h u n d r e d

I raced over to Whitepaw and I could only stare. The young tom was crushed by the tree trunk and I felt my paws begin to go numb as I let out a choked sob. *This had to be the beginning of an end.*

Author's Note

Hello! Thank you so much for taking your time to read *Cold*.

I appreciate all of your support since this short story was a bit tricky to make. Both the format and the plot was a little difficult to tie together.

There will indeed be a sequel to *Cold* and it will be called *Dark*.

I'd like to shout-out @hakunacrown, as my inspiration to make *Cold* was based off of her book *Predator*.

If you have any questions please ask away in the comments below or DM me!

Thank you again for reading *Cold,* I hope you all enjoyed! Stay tuned for *Dark*.